

CRANBERRIES

Crimson crop

Cranberry growers expect another record harvest



Josh Sampson of Pembroke, front, and John Hughes of Kingston corral cranberries.

Aspectacular cranberry harvest is ushering in fall at bogs across the South Shore. Acres of crimson berries float on flooded bogs as farmers corral them with booms. Hundreds of trucks filled with wet, gleaming berries rumble through the region's southernmost towns headed for receiving stations in Carver.

But this year, the harvest brings more beauty than profit.

Back-to-back bumper crops have created an unprecedented

surplus of cranberries. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts growers will harvest 5.81 million barrels this year, up 6 percent over last year's strong crop.

When Canadian figures are added, the USDA's Cranberry Marketing Committee projects a total harvest of 6.2 million to 6.4 million barrels.

Growers have seen prices drop from a high of \$80 a barrel two years ago to less than \$40 a barrel this year.

The glut has created opportunities for smaller,

independent cranberry handlers to capture some market share from industry leader Ocean Spray, prompting rumors the cooperative will merge with a multinational giant such as PepsiCo Inc., Coca-Cola Co. or Procter & Gamble.

Decas Cranberries in Wareham and Carver says business is thriving despite the cranberry surplus. The company recently built a processing plant in Carver to produce juice concentrate and dried cranberries for new markets abroad.

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The Patriot Ledger



John O'Connell of Kingston works during the harvest at Clear Brook bog on East Street in Duxbury.